

Message Text

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SUBJECT: GOVERNMENT FORMATION TALKS UNDER WAY

REF: HELSINKI 0535

1. PRIME MINISTER KALEVI SORSABEGAN GOVERNMENT FORMATION TALKS
FEBRUARY 21 WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF THE FIVE PARTIES COMPRISING THE
CURRENT GOVERNMENT. THE FIVE PARTIES ARE SORSA'S SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC
PARTY, CENTER PARTY, FINNISH PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC LEAGUE, (COMMUNIST
FRONT), SWEDISH PEOPLE'S PARTY AND LIBERAL PEOPLE'S PARTY. THE GOAL
IS THE FORMATION OF A NEW GOVERNMENT TO TAKE OFFICE ON OR SHORTLY
FOLLOWING MARCH 1, THE DAY THAT PRESIDENT KEKKONEN BEGINS HIS NEW
TERM. UNTIL THEN, THE PRESENT SORSA GOVERNMENT WILL CONTINUE ON
A CARETAKER BASIS.

2. SORSA'S PRELIMINARY DISCUSSIONS REVEALED A WILLINGNESS AMONG
THE FIVE PARTIES COMPRISING THE CURRENT GOVERNMENT TO CONTINUE
THE SAME COALITION IN A NEW GOVERNMENT. OVER THE PAST THREE DAYS
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REPRESENTATIVES OF THE FIVE PARTIES HAVE BEEN ATTEMPTING TO DRAFT
A GOVERNMENT PROGRAM WHICH IS PLANNED TO BE READY BY THE BEGINNING OF
NEXT WEEK. A NUMBER OF DIFFERENCES AMONG THE PARTIES REMAIN TO BE
RESOLVED, PARTICULARLY WITH RESPECT TO DEALING WITH AND
ANTICIPATED FIVE BILLION MARK (APPROXIMATELY US\$1.2 BILLION)
DEFICIT IN THE 1978 GOVERNMENT BUDGET. THE QUESTION OF ALLOTMENT
OF CABINET MINISTRIES AMONG THE FIVE PARTIES ALSO REMAINS TO

BE RESOLVED.

3. GOVERNMENT FORMATION TALKS HAVE BEEN ACCOMPANIED BY SPECULATION CONCERNING THE POSSIBILITY OF EARLY PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS. THE NEXT ELECTIONS ARE SCHEDULED TO BE HELD IN MARCH, 1979, BUT THE PRESIDENT HAS THE AUTHORITY TO ADVANCE THE ELECTIONS IF IN HIS JUDGMENT IT IS ADVISABLE. IT IS CONCEIVABLE THAT FAILURE OF THE CURRENT FIVE-PARTY TALKS COULD LEAD THE PRESIDENT TO ANNOUNCE EARLY ELECTIONS. HOWEVER, THE PRESIDENT HAS ALREADY SAID THAT HE DOES NOT FAVOR ADVANCING THE ELECTIONS, AND THE FIVE POLITICAL PARTIES CURRENTLY ENGAGED IN GOVERNMENT FORMATION TALKS HAVE ALSO INDICATED PUBLICLY THEIR LACK OF INTEREST IN EARLY ELECTIONS. WHILE EARLY ELECTIONS CANNOT BE RULED OUT, AT THIS STAGE IT APPEARS MORE LIKELY THAT THE PARTIES WILL FIND A WAY TO RESOLVE THEIR DIFFERENCES AND THAT THE FIVE-PARTY COALITION WILL BE RECONSTITUTED IN A NEW GOVERNMENT NEXT WEEK.
RIDGWAY

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